

INTRODUCTION: TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF MEDITATION
IN THE TRANSITION FROM LATE MEDIEVAL TO
EARLY MODERN INTELLECTUAL CULTURE

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The interdisciplinary colloquium *Discourses of Meditation in Art and Literature, 1300–1700*, held at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS) in April 2009, provided the initial impetus for the papers, now much revised, that make up this issue of *Intersections*. The volume aims at examining the forms and functions, ways and means of meditation in the late medieval and early modern period, c. 1300–c. 1600. Meditation/ *meditatio* may best be described as a self-imposed *disciplinary regime*, consisting of *mental* and *physical exercises* that allowed the practitioner to engender and evaluate his self-image, and thence to emend and refashion it. In practice, meditation often consisted of internal exercises that mobilized the sensitive faculties of motion, emotion, and sense (both external and internal) and the intellectual faculties of reason, memory, and will, with a view to reforming the soul. Techniques of visualization were frequently utilized to engage the soul's mediating function as *vinculum mundi*, its pivotal position in the great chain of being between heaven and earth, temporal and spiritual experience. Indeed, it may be right to claim that meditation was a process enabling the soul to discern its lineaments, for the purpose of self-amendment, self-reformation, and self-refashioning. As will be evident from the essays here gathered, there was not one process but many, and these processes would seem to have been applied for various ends, both secular and sacred.

Meditation possesses an ancient pedigree, as Pierre Hadot has amply demonstrated in articles and monographs on the Stoic, Epicurean, and Neo-Platonic philosophies. Construed as a spiritual exercise, it plays a crucial role in what he dubs the 'panorama of Stoico-Platonic inspired philosophical therapeutics'.¹ Amongst other sources, Hadot cites Philo

* The editors are grateful to the NIAS for having generously sponsored this conference.

¹ Hadot P., *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. A.I. Davidson, trans. M. Chase

of Alexandria's *Allegorical Interpretations*, that describe meditation (*melete*) as one of the chief therapeutic exercises, and *Who Is the Heir of Divine Things*, that enumerates such complementary therapies as 'research (*zetesis*), thorough investigation (*skepsis*), reading (*anagnosis*), listening (*akroasis*), attention (*prosoche*), self-mastery (*enkrateia*), and indifference to indifferent things'.²

In the philosophical traditions studied by Hadot, meditation is the process of thought that heightens *prosoche*, the mind's attention to itself and to God, the divine *logos*: both kinds of attentiveness must be cultivated, since presence of mind makes discernible the *logos*'s presence to consciousness. Moreover, meditation operates through the application of spiritual vigilance: it assays the adept's strength of moral conviction, evaluating how and in what degree his thoughts and actions conform to the philosophy, that is, the fundamental rule of life, he claims to have embraced. For the Stoics, this *kanon* posits a fundamental distinction between the order of nature with its necessary causes and effects, and the order of human morality with its freedom to choose between good and evil; for the Epicureans, the *kanon* distinguishes between the kinds and degrees of human desire, endorsing only those desires that may be categorized neither as unnatural nor unnecessary. Meditation consists in applying these canons to ourselves, first by calling them to mind as clearly and cogently as we can, so that they become fully available, and second, by appraising our words and deeds in light of these principles, and amending our behaviour accordingly. If this procedure enlists our best resources of memory and cognition, it also requires us rhetorically to visualize examples of good and bad conduct, against which to measure our adherence to the rule of life espoused. Amongst other examples, Hadot cites the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius and *Manual* of Epictetus, both of which exhort the reader to keep such epitomes always before his eyes.³

The spiritual exercises of ancient philosophy proved fundamental to the most influential meditative programme of the sixteenth century, Ignatius of Loyola's *Exercitia spiritualia*, as Paul Rabbow has convincingly shown in *Seelenführung*, his classic study of Stoic and Epicu-

(Malden, MA – Oxford, et al.: 1995) 84; idem, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: 1981).

² Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* 84.

³ Ibid., 131–132.

rean methods of meditation.⁴ Hadot leavens this account by adducing patristic sources equally decisive for the Ignatian reformulation of the spiritual exercise as an instrument of Christian *reformatio*. Basil of Caesarea was the theologian who installed *prosoche* as an essential component of the monastic life, in which meditative devotion serves crucially to foster the soul's watchfulness, its careful attention to spiritual matters, and shores up the monk's efforts to convert his heart into a fitting habitation of God. For Basil, meditation forms the basis for the examination of conscience, a point he argues in "In illud attende tibi ipsi", his famous sermon on *Deuteronomy* 15: 9: 'Beware lest perhaps a wicked thought steal in upon thy heart'. Basil's exegesis of this passage would seem in turn to derive from Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, in which verse 1: 7, 'If thou know not thyself, O fairest amongst women', is read as a call to scrutinize the soul's every motion of sense, feeling, and thought. Responding to Origen, Athanasius in the *Life of Anthony* explicitly equates meditative *prosoche* with the examination of conscience, on the warrant of scriptural passages such as *Proverbs* 4: 23, 'With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it', and 2 *Corinthians* 13: 5, 'Try your own selves if you be in the faith; prove ye yourselves'.⁵

In her magisterial study of meditative rhetoric and imaging, *The Craft of Thought*, Mary Carruthers closely examines the full spectrum of monastic schemata that enabled the mental practice of spiritual exercises. Amongst the many popular *machinae*, one of the most effective was the Prudentian *Psychomachia*, which concludes with a paronomastic chain of images signifying the triumph of Faith and Concord in Christ their source.⁶ In a series of punning tropes on *arca* (ark), *arcana* (secrets), *arcus* (citadels), and *arcus* (arches), Prudentius constructs a meditative itinerary leading from Noah's ark and the ark of the covenant, which enshrined divine *arcana* under the old dispensation, to the visionary *civitates* of the new, comprised by the visions of the heavenly Jerusalem in *Ezekiel* 40 and *Apocalypse* 21, and by the parabolic city on a hill in *Matthew* 5, that signifies the building of

⁴ Rabbow P., *Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (Munich: 1954) 55–90.

⁵ On Origen, Basil, and Athanasius as proponents of *prosoche*, see Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 130–131, 134, and 139.

⁶ On Prudentius's *Psychomachia*, the mnemonic *catena*, and the inventive power of *paronomasia*, see Carruthers M., *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: 1998) 143–150; esp. 149–150.

the apostolic Church. These are versions of the divine citadel through whose arched gateways enter Faith and Concord, personifications of the Christian community, there to dwell eternally.

The sequence of *paranomasiae* encodes an exegetical operation – the transformation of Old Testament types (the covenantal arks of Noah and of Moses) into New Testament antitypes (the Church of Christ and the heavenly kingdom it adumbrates). The trope of building up signifies the layered process of exegetical unfolding, that itself bears witness to the monk's part in raising the edifice of faith, wherein he strives to domicile his body and soul. As Carruthers observes, the *meditans* tracks his progress from link to link of the mnemonic chain, by utilizing 'rhetorical ornament[s] of great inventive power': *enargeia* confers clarity and vividness on the interlocked components, and *ekphrasis* refashions them pictorially into the descriptive image of a building being constructed.⁷ These sites and sights are seen to conceal divine mysteries (*arcana*) within an allegorical form – ark, arch, fortress – that encodes diverse materials and inspires further meditative concatenations.

Monastic spiritual exercises often seem infinitely generative when compared with early modern meditative schemes such as the Ignatian *Exercitia spiritualia* and their offspring, which attempt discursively to conform the *meditans* (lay or clerical) to a doctrinal norm, even while defending his right freely to engage in meditation as a private process of self-conformation to Christ.⁸ The immense success of Ignatius's exercises resulted from his ability to reconcile these ideal functions – public and private, corporate and individual – within a performative framework subdivided into measurable units, that progresses by stages from the examination of conscience to the contemplation of divine love.

⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁸ On the *Exercitia spiritualia*, the literature on which is vast, see Fabre P.-A., *Ignace de Loyola. Le lieu de l'image. Le problème de la composition de lieu dans les pratiques spirituelles et artistiques jésuites de la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: 1992); O'Malley J.W., *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: 1993) 37–50, 127–133; Fabre P.-A., "Les Exercices spirituels sont-ils illustrables?", in Giard L. – Vaucelles L. de (eds.), *Les Jésuites à l'âge baroque 1540–1640* (Grenoble: 1996) 197–209; Ruhstorfer K., *Das Prinzip ignatianischen Denkens. Zum geschichtlichen Ort der 'Geistlichen Übungen' des Ignatius von Loyola*, Freiburger Theologische Studien 161 (Freiburg – Basel – Vienna: 1998) 112–219; Palmer M.E., *On Giving the Spiritual Exercises: The Early Jesuit Manuscript Directories and the Official Directory of 1599* (St. Louis: 1996).

Again, however, it is worth emphasizing that there were many approaches to the meditative life, even after the publication and papal ratification of the *Exercitia spiritualia* in 1548, as we want now to indicate by examining three important examples: the *Glossa ordinaria et interlinearis* and its summons deeply to meditate the parables of Christ;⁹ the *Humanae salutis monumenta* (*Monuments/Instructions of Human Salvation*) of Benito Arias Montano, one of the first scriptural emblem books, that supplies verbal and visual, poetic and pictorial instruments for meditating the history of human redemption;¹⁰ and *Le pelerin de Lorete* (*Pilgrim of Loreto*) of Louis Richeome, S.J., that adapts one of Ignatius's chief meditative devices, the composition of place, expanding it into a virtual pilgrimage to the Marian shrine of Loreto.¹¹ Whereas the *Glossa* is exegetical, and the *Monumenta* emblematic, the *Pelerin de Lorete* is heuristic, in that it inspires the reader to embark on a journey, to imagine and grapple with the problems such a voyage entails both for the body and the soul, and ultimately to secure the goal of reaching the reliquary sanctuary of Loreto, where the mystery of the Incarnation, first bodied forth in this place, becomes fully manifest to the mind, heart, and spirit.

The *Monumenta* and *Pelerin de Lorete* were designed to address a mixed audience of lay and clerical *meditantes*, ready and willing to take up the process of soul-formation. The *Glossa*, first resort of exegetes, both Reformed and Roman Catholic, became increasingly accessible to lay readers upon publication of the first printed editions by Adolph Rusch (Strassburg: 1480–1481), Anton Koberger (Nuremberg: 1487), and Johannes Petri and Johannes Froben (Basel: 1498).¹² The meditative templates on offer in these three books would have appealed

⁹ I have consulted the Venetian edition of 1588, which derives ultimately from the Basil edition of 1508: *Biblia Sacra cum glossis. Interlineari, et ordinaria, Nicolai Lyrani Postilla, ac Moralitatibus, Bergensis Additionibus, et Thoringi Replicis*, 7 vols. (Venice, Società dell'Aquila [Giovanni Varisco and Comp.]: 1588).

¹⁰ Arias Montano B., *Humanae salutis monumenta* B. Ariae Montani studio constructa et decantata (Antwerp, Christopher Plantin: 1571).

¹¹ Richeome L., *Le pelerin de Lorete. Voeu à la glorieuse Vierge Marie Mere de Dieu* (Lyon, Pierre Rigaud: 1607). I have consulted the English translation of 1629: Worsley E. (trans.), *The Pilgrim of Loreto. Performing His Vow Made to the Glorious Virgin Mary Mother of God. Conteyning Divers Devout Meditations upon the Christian and Cath. Doctrine* (Paris, n.p.: 1629), in Rogers D.M. (ed.), *English Recusant Literature* 285 (Ilkley – London: 1976).

¹² On early printed editions of the *Glossa*, see Froehlich K. – Gibson M.T., *Biblia latina cum glossa ordinaria: Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81*, 4 vols. (Turnhout: 1992) VII–XXI, esp. XVI–XIX.

widely, being exclusive neither to theologians nor emblematisers, nor again, to Jesuits.

Printed editions of the *Glossa ordinaria et interlinearis* incorporate four species of scriptural commentary: the so-called common glosses ascribed to Walafrid Strabo, the interlinear glosses of Anselm of Laon, the postilla of Nicholas of Lyra, and the additions of Paulus Brugensis. In the common gloss attaching to *Luke* 8: 9, 'And his disciples asked him what this parable might be', Walafrid Strabo admonishes the exegete to meditate the parables, if he wishes firmly to grasp them and fathom their innermost secrets. The reference is to the Parable of the Sower, recounted in *Matthew* 13, *Mark* 4, and *Luke* 8:

Later, the parable having been finished (as Mark says), [...] these twelve [disciples] who were with him asked him [Christ] about it. We are instructed morally by this, in as much as – if we wish to grasp the sense of divine words – we set aside all concerns about earthly commotions and enter into the house of God, that is, the secret inner chambers of Scripture, by means of prayer and meditation, declaring, "Open thou my eyes etc."¹³

This passage insists that parables, if they are to be understood, demand the reader's full attention: like the disciples, he must inspect them closely, discover their spiritual meaning, as if he were questioning Christ himself. If parabolic meditation is an interrogative exercise, its objects are the images with which Christ has clothed his meaning. Meditative vision both sees and sees through these images, making them transparent to the meaning they body forth figuratively, as the closing reference to *Psalms* 118: 18 strongly implies: 'Open thou my eyes (revela oculos meos): and I will consider the wondrous things of thy law'.

What are the specifics of this exegetical method that doubles as a meditative programme, in which parabolic images act as figurative conveyers of evangelical doctrine?

Delivered by Christ from a ship docked at Capharnaum on the Sea of Galilee, the Parable of the Sower describes a farmer who goes forth to scatter seeds: some fall onto a thoroughfare, others onto stony

¹³ *Glos. ord. Lucae*, chapt. VIII, fol. 146r, col. 2C: 'Nam mox finita parabola, [...] (ut Marcus ait) [...] interrogaverunt eum [sc. Christum] hi, qui cum eo erant duodecim, parabolam. In quo moraliter instruimur, ut si intelligentiam divinatorum verborum assequi volumus, sepositis terrenorum tumultuum curis domum Dei, id est, occulta scripturae penetralia, orando et meditando intremus, dicentes: "Revela oculos meos etc."'

ground, still others amongst thorns, and some onto good soil, whence alone they yield a thirty-, sixty-, and hundred-fold of grain. Since the apostles approached Christ soon after the fact, asking him to interpret the parable and explain why he teaches in parables here and elsewhere (*Matthew* 13: 36, *Mark* 4: 10, *Luke* 8: 9), this episode functions in the exegetical tradition as the warrant for parabolic instruction, the manner and meaning of which are authorized by Christ.

Christ expounds the parable by emphasizing that its images are figurative, not literal: the seeds are the *verbum Dei* (both the words of the Gospel and Christ as the Word), which are trampled when they fall ‘in viam’, that is, into recalcitrant hearts and minds that refuse to receive Christ; quickly sprout and then wither when they fall ‘in petrosa’, that is, into inconstant souls quick to receive but also to discard the Word; grow but are soon choked when they fall ‘in spinetum’, that is, into hearts initially receptive but then overmastered by quotidian matters and temporal concerns; and take root, flower, and fruit when they fall ‘in terram bonam’, that is, into good Christians who keep the faith, imitating Christ to the fullest extent of their abilities. The *Glossa*, especially the glosses on *Matthew* 13 and *Luke* 8, define the parable as a device used by Christ to demarcate the literalism of the Old Law, anchored in extraneous circumstances, from the figurativeness of the New, that conjoins external to internal matters, infusing mere things with spiritual meanings (‘externis interna contulit, ad quae Iudaei non intraverunt, foris in litera fixi’).¹⁴

Christ devises parables to accommodate his multifarious followers, whose varied desires and inclinations require equally diverse methods of instruction. However, he addresses them mainly to his disciples, speaking *manifeste* to the general public and *parabolice* to his closest supporters, signalling by the phrase, ‘he that hath ears to hear, let him hear’, that what he says is meant spiritually:

[“And he spoke to them many things in parables”]: He does not say ‘all’, because had he [Christ] spoken only in parables, the multitude would have gone away empty, having profited not at all; and so he rendered some things in parables – namely, what counted as mysteries and were not meant to be understood by the multitude, but fit to be known solely by the disciples. [...] Other things he said directly in their proper sense, so that the multitude could understand them.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Glos. ord. Matthaei*, chapt. XIII, fol. 44r, col. 1A.

¹⁵ *Glos. ord. Matthaei*, chapt. XIII, *De Lyra.*, fol. 44r, col. 1B: ‘[...] Non dicit omnia, quia si omnia loqueretur in parabolis, multitudo recessisset vacua sine utilitate; et ideo

The *Glossa* also construes parables as defensive, indeed offensive instruments, mustered up to divide believers from disbelievers. It makes this point emphatically, arguing that the opacity of parables was designed to forestall conversion: their ill-disposed auditors, as if struck blind, failed to recognize the truths thus veiled, and consequently, refused to believe in Christ whom they ultimately crucified. ‘God had blinded them’ (‘excaecavit oculos eorum’), as the *Glossa* avows, superimposing Christ’s trenchant reading of *Isaiah* 6: 9 – ‘Hearing, hear, and understand not: and seeing, see the vision, and know it not’, as cited in *John* 12: 40, onto his gentler paraphrase of this same prophecy in *Matthew* 13: 15, where he uses it to justify parabolic usage.¹⁶ Affrighted by the miraculous events following the Resurrection, as Matthew reports, they later realized the enormity of their transgression, regretting with a heightened compunction their initial failure to understand. On this account, the parables first averted belief, in order finally to secure and strengthen penitential faith in Christ. John’s version, on the contrary, delineates more sharply between belief and disbelief:

It is said that they were blinded, and the Lord’s intentions were hidden from them by means of parables, for this reason, that they might afterward be converted more salubriously. For having failed to comprehend the things obscurely spoken, they failed to believe in [Christ]: and so they crucified him, and then, terrified by the miracles that took place after the Resurrection, they were stung all the more by guilt at so great a crime. Whence their sin having been remitted, they [now] burn with a greater love. But John also cites this passage [i.e., *Isaiah* 6: 9] in the following way: ‘He blinded their eyes, so that they saw not’. Whereby he clearly indicates that they were made blind not so that recollecting those things and regretting their failure to understand, they might at length be converted, for this could only have transpired were they to believe. On the contrary, they were blinded, in order that they might not believe, which they deserved because of their other sins.¹⁷

aliqua parabolice loquebatur – ea scilicet quae erant secreta et non debebant sciri a turba, sed solum a discipulis – [...] alia autem loquebatur manifeste, ita quod turba poterat capere’. Cf. col. 2D (reference to Jerome): ‘secundum Hieronymum ubicumque ponitur hoc verbum designatur mysticus intellectus, quia sub verbis parabolicis alius sensus est per intellectum requirendus’.

¹⁶ *Glos. ord. Matthaei*, chapt. XIII, fol. 44v, col. 1E.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: ‘Dicitur quod ideo excaecati sunt et sententiae domini per parabolas eis occultatae sunt, ut post salubrius converterentur. Nam quia obscure dicta non intellexerunt, ideo non crediderunt in eum, et sic crucifixerunt, et sic post resurrectionem miraculis territi, maioris criminis reatu compuncti sunt. Unde accepta indulgentia ampliori flagrant dilectione. Sed Iohannes hunc locum ita dicit: Propterea non

Most importantly, the *Glossa* singles out *Matthew* 13: 16 ‘Blessed are your eyes, because they see’, as the scriptural locus for the notion of spiritual sight. Whereas the blindness of the Jews arose from their incredulity, the clarity of vision shown by the apostles resulted from their readiness to discern the latent power of divinity, while closely observing the external deeds of Christ (‘non solum facta exteriora conspiciendo, sed virtutem divinitatis latentem intelligendo’).¹⁸ As they saw spiritually, so also did they hear, or again, what their ears heard, their faith led them internally to affirm (‘non solum audiendo exterius, sed etiam per fidem assentiendo interius’).¹⁹ In turn, spiritual discernment originates in the realization that every *res* can be viewed in several ways: it has multiple *meanings*, as becomes apparent when the parable of the sower, the metaphor of stony ground in particular, is compared to the imagery of other parables. The gloss on *Matthew* 13: 5–6, ‘And other some fell upon stony ground [...] and because they had no root, they withered away’, makes this case:

Stony places need quickly to germinate, but the root remains unfixed, for the soil is shallow, that is, there is too little longing for salvation. From this exposition of the Lord we learn that no thing signifies always in the same way. For the rock stands here for hardness of heart, the earth for softness, and the sun for the heat of persecution, whereas elsewhere the sun signifies a good, as for example in ‘the righteous shine like the sun’, the foundation stone strength of faith, and the earth worldly thoughts.²⁰

The emphasis on things seen and the multiplicity of their signifieds/meanings connects to two final points. First, the circumstances in which the parable of the sower was delivered demonstrate that parables consist not only of the Lord’s words but also of his deeds (‘nota non solum verba domini, sed et facta parabolas esse’).²¹ These *facta*

poterant credere, quia iterum dixit Isaias: Excaecavit oculos eorum, ut non viderent. Ubi aperte dicit, non ideo factam excaecationem, ut ea commoniti et dolentes se non intelligere converterentur aliquando. Non enim hoc possent, nisi crederent; sed potius ideo excaecati, ut non crederent, quod aliis peccatis meruerunt’.

¹⁸ *Glos. ord. Matthaei*, chapt. XIII, *De Lira*, fol. 44v, col. 2H.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Glos. ord. Matthaei*, chapt. XIII, fol. 44r, col. 1A–B: ‘Petrosa cito quaerunt germinare, sed non figitur radix, quia non est alta terra, id est, quia parum inest desiderii salutaris. In hac expositione domini discimus, quia res non semper in eadem significatione ponuntur. Nam petra hic pro duricia, terra pro lenitate mentis, sol pro fervore persecutionis, cum sol alibi in bono – ‘Fulgunt iusti sicut sol’ – et petra in fundamento pro fortitudine fidei, et terra pro terrenis cogitationibus’.

²¹ *Glos. ord. Matthaei*, chapt. XIII, fol. 44v, col. 1E.

are mystical signs ('signa mysticarum rerum'): beyond the scope of the multitude, they require to be seen closely by the disciples and interpreted accordingly.²² As the *Glossa* avers with reference to *Luke* 8: 5 'The sower went out to sow his seed', Christ's progress from shore to sea and action of climbing into the ship, conveyed corporeally what his parabolic sermon conveyed verbally ('idipsum situ corporis, quod processu sermonis insinuans').²³ Both the enacted image and the spoken image signify that the Son of God has entered the world to sow the Word.²⁴ Second, just as Christ expounded the parable of the sower not word for word ('secundum singula verba') but substantively, focusing on its essential meaning ('sed summam sententiae'), so in this way must all parables be interpreted figuratively, rather than literally. The parable of the cornerstone (*Psalm* 117: 22 and *Matthew* 21: 42) is adduced:

But the story told by the Lord himself was a parable, which never requires that the things said are proven to have taken place literally: [as for example] the stone anointed by Jacob is Christ; the stone rejected by the builders is the one, which has been made the head of the corner. But the former was actually performed in deed, the latter only predicted in images (resp. metaphorically, 'in figuris praedictum'). For the former was written by a narrator of past events, the latter foretold by a prophet of events to come.²⁵

In sum, the parable is made up of figurative images that must be read as such. The call to meditate the parable impels the *meditans* to discern the constituent figures encoded in the parabolic *verba* and *facta* being visualized by Christ. This operation is exegetical, for it unfolds scriptural meaning, more often than not by reference to prophetic images, such as *Isaiah* 6: 9, that Christ marshals parabolically. The signifying images of which the parable consists, redound upon the exegete who meditates them, for these images represent the Christian vocation, or better, identity, that he is enjoined to adopt.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Glos. ord. Lucae*, chapt. XIII, fol. 146r, col. 1B.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Glos. ord. Matthaei*, chapt. XIII, fol. 44v, col. 1F–45r, col. 1A: 'Ipsius autem domini narratio parabola fuit, de qua nunquam exigitur, ut etiam ad literam facta monstrentur, quae sermone proferuntur: Christus est lapis unctus a Iacob, et lapis reprobatus ab aedificantibus, qui factus est in caput anguli. Sed illud etiam in rebus gestis factum est, hoc autem tantum in figuris praedictum; illud quippe scripsit narrator rerum praeteritarum, hoc praenuntiator tantummodo futurorum'.

Benito Arias Montano's *Humanae salutis monumenta*, promulgates a different kind of meditative programme, based in the word-and-image apparatus of the emblem and its attendant poetics. This early scriptural emblem book consists of 71 chapters, each composed of a picture, mottos, and Horatian ode, that encapsulate the history of human salvation from the fall of Adam and Eve to the Last Judgment.²⁶ The publisher, Christopher Plantin, credits the book's texts and images to Arias Montano, describing him as a skilled draftsman and inspired poet.²⁷ Abraham de Bruyn, Pieter Huys, and the Wierix brothers of Antwerp engraved the prints after modelli by Pieter van der Borcht, who was given the task of translating Arias Montano's inventions into working drawings. In his prefaces to the *Monumenta*, Plantin elucidates the relation between the images and texts: Arias Montano, we are told, has displayed his lofty erudition, his perspicuous command of doctrine, and his mastery of sweet and dignified poetic argument, which he has applied to expounding a series of meditative images.²⁸ This book, Plantin continues,

²⁶ For the two variants of the 1571 edition, see Stroomberg H. (comp.) – Stock J. van der (ed.), *The New Hollstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings, and Woodcuts, 1450–1700: The Wierix Family, Book Illustrations*, 2 parts (Ouderkerk aan den IJssel: 2006) I, 23–31, nos. 3.1–3.43; 32–36, nos. 3b.1–3b.42. On the *Humanae salutis monumenta*, see Hänsel S., *Der spanische Humanist Benito Arias Montano (1527–1598) und die Kunst* (Münster: 1991) 68–89; Bowen K.L., “Illustrating Books with Engravings: Plantin's Working Practices Revealed”, *Print Quarterly* 20 (2003) 3–34; Bowen K.L. – Imhof D., *Christopher Plantin and Engraved Book Illustrations in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, New York, et al.: 2008) 107–121; and Melion W.S., *The Meditative Art: Studies in the Northern Devotional Print, 1550–1625 [Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts I]* (Philadelphia: 2009) 13–14; 43–49.

²⁷ “Christophorus Plantinus Lectori S.” [First Preface], in Arias Montano, *Humanae salutis monumenta*, unfoliated: ‘Ariae Montani publicae utilitatis studiosissimi ac de bonis literis et disciplinis optime meriti, Architecturae etiam peritissimi (cur enim nisi ingeniosissimo huic viro, tabularum, quas in hoc opere artificiose caelatas conspicias, admirabilem structuram acceptam referamus?) foecundissimum et quovis doctrinae genere refertissimum opus, id est, unam et septuaginta odas [...]’.

²⁸ “Christophorus Plantinus Lectori S.” [Second Preface], in *ibid.*, unfoliated: ‘Simulac ea, quae a nobis nuper excusa sunt, Humanae salutis monumenta, a Benedicto Aria Montano excelsi ingenii viro, non minus eleganti quam docto poemate conscripta ad multorum doctissimorum et amplissimorum hominum manus pervenerunt, non potuerunt illi summam hominis doctrinam, rerum divinarum cognitionem clarissimam et gravissimum illud argumentum admirabili carminis suavitate et dignitate tractatum summopere non admirari. Eorum enim omnium, quae vel ab ipso Adamo ad Christi D. N. postremum usque iudicium, in sacris libris ad nostram salutem necessaria habentur, seriem et summam tanta certitudine et facilitate complectitur, ut a nemine unquam tanto splendore ac doctrina atque a praestantissimo hoc viro tractatam esse mihi suis verbis sint testati.’

contains two kinds of moral instructions: the first is plainly 'architectonic', consisting of pictorial images of places, persons, and events. This kind is explained by the words of 'architects', in three modes: first by subscriptions that describe the principal argument of the *picturae* and supply straightforward didactic instruction; these sorts of texts are called *inscriptiones*. The second mode consists of *dedicationes*, which either comment on virtue and vice by referring to the contemplation of the *picturae* or indicate the authoritative significance of the persons or events represented. The last mode is represented by appended monostichs, distichs, or other short poems (epigrams) that propose certain ways in which the viewer may use the images. All three types of text should be concise and grave, full of significance and antique flavour, in marked difference from poetic, oratorical, comic, and historical styles. They should always keep up their numerical (mathematical) organisation and clear definitions, which means their architectonic organisation. Otherwise they will be shallow, boring and insignificant. Only writers who are skilled in architecture, are able to compose such texts.²⁹

The second kind of instruction is poetic and consists not of pictorial images but of verbal imagery that depicts things fit to be viewed by the reader ('non imaginibus [...], sed verbis rem omnem depingit, atque ea etiam spectanda legentium sensibus proponit et describit'), describing what pictorial artifice cannot demonstrate ('quae nullo picturae artificio effingi possunt'). This category portrays words, orations, movements of the body and soul, and all forms of intellectual activity. In the *Monumenta*, Plantin avers, both genera observe the rules of *decorum*, for both maintain the sanctity and dignity of piety and religion, applying to this end the resources of architectonic gravity and poetic elegance, along with a plenitude of meanings.³⁰ That the individual *monumenta* have observed these criteria is evident, Plantin asseverates, from the testimony of readers, who have confirmed

²⁹ Ibid.: 'Duplex in hoc libro continetur monimentorum genus: unum est plane Architectonicum, constans picturis et imaginibus locorum, personarum ac rerum gestarum. Hoc architectorum orationibus illustratur, quarum triplex in universum ratio est: aut enim summum totius depictae rei argumentum describitur, et ea doctrinae pars, quam didascaliam vocant, usurpatur; cuius generis orationes *inscriptiones* dicuntur. Quibus vel virtus vel vitium illius imaginis contemplatione annotatur aut personae vel rei gestae auctoritas indicatur, eaque per dedicationes exponi solet. Aut usus aliquis capiendus ex ipsius operis inspectione spectatori proponitur, idque plerunque disticho aut monosticho, vel alias brevi epigrammate expeditur. Totum autem hoc dicendi genus breve, grave, significantissimum atque antiquitatis plenum esse debet, neque cum poetico, aut oratorio, aut comico, aut historico stylo convenire; sed suis numeris et diffinitionibus, hoc est, architectonicis constare; alias ieiunum et frigidum, languensque futurum. Id quod nemo plene assequi imitarive feliciter potest qui architecturae artis peritus non sit'.

³⁰ Ibid.

the book's efficacy, claiming that these 'objects of pleasure' have yet moved them to feel intense sorrow at the sufferings of Christ.³¹

Plantin dwells on these criteria at such length, because the book was so novel, its genre – scriptural emblematics – virtually unprecedented. He makes clear repeatedly that the monuments require to be meditated, if they are to produce their full effects, chief amongst which is the rejuvenation of weary minds ('animis recreandis'), oppressed by too much study and labour. The pleasure to be found here goes hand in hand with a loftiness of theme designed to test even the most perspicacious reader: 'For learned men recognized that [Arias Montano's] treatment of his sacred theme, though both instructive and delightful, and needful to every sort of scholar, would not be easy to understand, on account of its exalted subject. For it wanted, as they said, a reader erudite, devout, and exceedingly attentive, and also well-versed in piety and in holy books'.³² The architectural texts, as we have seen, invite the reader to consider and contemplate the pictorial image, while the complementary poems encourage him to use his senses in meditating the verbal image ('ea etiam spectanda legentium sensibus proponit'). The engraved illustrations, on the other hand, provide clear instructions even for the uneducated ('imperitos etiam [...] luculenter edoceant'), and 'move the spirit' ('ipsumque animum moveant'). In sum, then, the *Monumenta* promulgates a new kind of meditative programme: under the sign of *otium*, it challenges but also tranquillizes the eyes, mind, and heart, settling them on texts and images that explore the theme of salvation, in ways new and old.

Louis Richeome's *Pelerin de Lorete*, as noted above, adapts the meditative form and function of the *Exercitia spiritualia*, to the narrative device of a pilgrimage to the Holy House of Loreto.³³ The journey, replete with circumstantial detail, stands for the meditative itinerary traveled by the reader of the treatise, who desires to ponder the mystery of the Incarnation by visiting its foremost relic, the house at Nazareth

³¹ Ibid. Cf. "Christophorus Plantinus Lectori S." [First Preface], in *ibid.*, unfoliated.

³² Ibid.: 'Videbant quippe homines sapientissimi, fore, ut sancti illius argumenti tractatio, eaque non solum utilis et iucunda, verum etiam omni literatorum generi plane necessaria, propter rerum quae in ea continentur, celsitudinem, non a quovis ita facile intelligeretur: Doctum enim (aiebant) pium et valde attentum beneque in sacris libris et pietate exercitatum lectorem ea desiderat'.

³³ On the *Pelerin de Lorete*, see Fabre P.-A., "Lieu de mémoire et paysage spirituel: les jardins du noviciat de Sant'Andrea del Quirinale selon la *Peinture spirituelle* de Louis Richeome", in Mosser M. – Nys P. (eds.), *Les jardins, art et lieu de mémoire* (Besançon: 1995) 135–148.

where the Virgin Annunciate consented to be the mother of God. Pictorial images serve to signpost the crucial stages of this journey, which ends with the heart's transformation into a holy house of the Lord, inhabited by the presence of Christ. Midway through Book I, in the chapter "Of Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation", Richeome offers a full account of the ideal meditative exercise, deriving from Ignatius, that privileges three components: *mental images*, *rational order*, and the *transition from meditation to contemplation*. He defines meditation as a discursive practice that aims to apprehend some divine subject, 'noting the causes and effects, and deducing conclusions agreeable to the honour of God, and our good'.³⁴

The first meditation proper begins with a preamble, that adapts the Ignatian technique of the *compositio loci*: the votary fashions a mental image of the place inhabited by the meditative subject, in order better to grasp the subject's lineaments and operations.³⁵ Richeome makes clear that he uses the term 'subject' to signify a mystery of faith. But if the subject is spiritual, such as a virtue or a point of doctrine, we must instead represent it in the 'manner of a parable', clothing it in a representable form.³⁶ Richeome offers up 'sinne' as an example: 'as if we meditate upon sinne, we may imagine the soule shut up, and imprisoned within the body, as in an obscure and loathsome prison; and sinne, as a cruell and monstrous tyrant, a dragon, a serpent, and such as the Divell is painted, and all the holy Doctours doe some-tymes describe it'.³⁷ It is clear from all this, as Pierre-Antoine Fabre, Judy Loach, and Jeffrey Chipps Smith have observed, that Richeome's meditative programme, here as elsewhere, is anchored in images, and moreover, that such mental images are pictorial in form and effect.³⁸ Indeed, he advises those readers whose imaginative faculty proves insufficiently inventive, that they may find it useful to place before

³⁴ Worsley (trans.), *The Pilgrim of Loreto* 49.

³⁵ As described in the subsequent chapter, "How Prayer Should Be Made, and of the Partes, and Use Thereof", in *ibid.* 51.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* 51–52.

³⁸ See Fabre, "Lieu de mémoire et paysage spirituel"; Chipps Smith J., *Sensuous Worship: Jesuits and the Art of the Early Catholic Reformation in Germany* (Princeton – Oxford: 2002) 50–52; Loach J., "An Apprenticeship in Seeing: Richeome's *La Peinture spirituelle*", in Dekoninck R. – Guiderdoni-Bruslé A. – Melion W.S. (eds.), *Ut pictura meditatio: The Meditative Image in Northern Art, 1500–1700* (Turnhout: forthcoming); Dekoninck R. *Ad imaginem: Status, fonctions et usages de l'image dans la littérature spirituelle jésuite du XVII^e siècle* (Geneva: 2005) 68–75; 78–81; 119–121.

the eyes ‘some picture or image of the matter we meditate, which may serve instead of these representations, to them that cannot frame this themselves’.³⁹ The function of the first preamble, he adds, is to focus the attention by settling or restraining the imagination, which he characterizes in Augustinian terms, as a ‘flying and wandering faculty, going for the most part out of the house without leave, & carrying our thoughts sometymes before they are aware, as far from the marke, or matter, as the North is from the South’.⁴⁰

The meditative ‘body or corps’ consists of the points to be meditated: ‘one, two, three, or more: as if meditating of the Resurrection of our Saviour, we should make the first point of the tyme or houre of his rying, the second of the glory of his body, the third of the souldiers feare that kept the Sepulcher, the fourth of the apparition and testimony of the Angells, and so in other matters’.⁴¹ We might call this a joint fleshing-out and parsing-up of the image promulgated in the first preamble, and now subjected to closer scrutiny. The body of the meditation leads to what Richeome christens a ‘speach’, that is, an affective conversation between the soul and its maker, in which the votary renders thanks, offers service, begs for the pardon of sins and the grace of amendment, and rehearses what it has come to understand about the meditative subject.⁴² Finally, having discoursed upon the ‘mervailous workes of God’, his ‘will warmed by love’, his ‘soul caste [...] into the armes of [the Creator’s] holy providence’, he ascends by the grace of God from meditation to contemplation of the subject at hand.⁴³

This is an experience of heightened presence, still based in sight, but attentively intensified and thoroughly known in the act of beholding: ‘Contemplation is a regard of the eyes of the soule fastened attentively upon some obiect, as if after having meditated of the creation, she should set her eye of her understanding fast and fixed upon the greatness of God, upon the beauty of the Heavens; or having discoursed of the passion of our Saviour, she behouldeth him present, & seeth him

³⁹ Richeome, *Pilgrime of Loreto* 52.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. Richeome visualizes the Resurrection to demonstrate how the ‘body or corps of the prayer’ is parsed: ‘as if meditating of the Resurrection of our Saviour, we should make the first point of the tyme or houre of his rying, the second of the glory of his body, the third of the souldiers feare that kept the Sepulcher, the fourth of the apparition and testimony of the Angells, and so in other matters’.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ As described in ‘Of Prayer, Meditation, and Contemplation’, in *ibid.* 49.

crucified, and without any other discourse persevereth constantly in this spectacle'.⁴⁴

This contemplative clarity circles back upon meditation, transforming it into a 'cleere knowledge', whose parts, having been meditatively (that is, discursively) parsed, are all at once sewn into a seamless whole, understood without discourse: 'Then the soule doth contemplate upon her meditation: [...] For the understanding having attentively, and with many reasons to and fro meditated the mystery, and gathered divers lights together, doth frame unto herself a cleere knowledge, wherof without further discourse, one way or other, she enjoyeth (as I may say) a vision which approacheth to the knowledge of Angels, who understand without discourse'.⁴⁵ Whereas meditation is like the reading of a book sentence by sentence, or the chewing of food piece by piece, contemplation is pleasurable not laborious, like 'casting the eyes upon a picture, discerning all at once'.⁴⁶ Given that this account hinges on the act of viewing images, it might be more accurate to compare meditation to the reading of an image in parts, starting from the setting; contemplation to the seeing of the image as a whole into which these parts are altogether subsumed.

We have been examining three paradigms of the meditative exercise, as it was conceived and practiced in early modern Europe: in the *Glossa*, meditation functions exegetically, in the *Monumenta* emblematically, in the *Pelerin* discursively and progressively as the prerequisite to contemplation. As will also be evident, meditation easily accommodated images of all kinds, both actual and virtual, pictorial and imagined. The essays gathered in this volume, written by scholars of art, history, literature, and philosophy, take up the topic of meditation, posing further questions about its forms and functions, kinds and degrees, and exploring the varieties of meaning that meditation, conceived and practiced as a mode of interpretation, brought to consciousness and made graspable. First and foremost, they ask what constitutes a meditative programme? How were such programmes put into practice? By whom were they devised, promulgated, and disseminated? Which

⁴⁴ Ibid. 49–50.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 50. As an example, Richeome cites Moses who, 'having seene the vision of the burning Bush', approached and 'discours[ed] why it consumed not'.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

features were shared in common, which were variable? Or put differently, how, when, and where were meditative exercises described and propagated, and to what ends? Did meditation operate only privately or also publicly, and to what extent was it bounded by the secular and/or sacred aspirations of its practitioners? What is the relation of religious to philosophical meditation, of spiritual exercises to literary, epistolary, or poetic introspection? What is the connection between meditation and the hermeneutic practices associated with the reading of Scripture and other sorts of text?

One of the specifics of late medieval and early modern intellectual life is the participation of new groups – humanists, artists, and vernacular writers, amongst other members of the laity – in intellectual discourse. This fact had an important impact on meditative theory and practice. The new intellectuals would take over the existing religious traditions and transform them into new and different meditative processes. Therefore, the first section of this book is devoted to these new processes, in which *meditatio* is defined in a broader, not exclusively religious sense.

Karl Enekel attempts to understand why in Latin literature between 1300 and 1600, authorial paratexts such as prefaces, letters of dedication, and letters ‘To the Reader’ spectacularly increased in frequency, number, size, and variety of contents. Enekel analyses how these paratexts guide the reader by means of ‘meditative frames’ that tell him how to use the texts properly, and how to format his thoughts in the process of reading and interpreting. Amongst the most important means authors used to safeguard proper textual meditation was the evocation of “living images” of the author, dedicatee, and related persons, along with the creation of visual images in three-dimensional space, such as landscapes, buildings, gardens and other settings, in which intellectual activities were located in the most sophisticated of ways.

Jan Papy unfolds the meditative processes developed by the ‘father of Humanism’, Francis Petrarch, especially in his monumental collection of private letters, the *Familiarium rerum libri*. Papy shows the many ways that Petrarch used his literary re-invention of the ‘private letter’: it functions variously as a medium of methodical autobiographical self-reflexion, introspection, self-investigation, spiritual transformation, cultivation of wisdom, mental self-rewriting, intellectual communication, and humanist *paraenesis* productive of *virtus*, *studia humanitatis*, love of antiquity, and friendship.

Geert Warnar considers how and why the dialogue came to be favoured as a joint instrument of moral instruction and meditative self-formation, in Dutch literary works of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, such as the *Seneka leeren* (*Teachings of Seneca*) and *Tboeck vanden leven Jhesu Christi* (*The Book of the Life of Jesus Christ*). Defined by the thirteenth-century Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant, as a textual and rhetorical conversation, the dialogue allowed authors vividly to convey the process of thoughtful reflection undertaken by the student at his master's instigation, with a view to reforming knowledge and transforming himself.

Paul Smith discusses how the process of self-reflection and meditation takes shape in the works of two of the greatest writers of French literature, Montaigne and Rousseau, both of whom worked on large and extremely influential autobiographical projects. Smith first analyses the meditative methods Montaigne developed in his *Essais*. Most interestingly, each *Essai* represents a *leçon par l'exemple*, i.e., an exemplum of a certain meditative scheme, which the author always shapes in the solitude of his library, while walking, daydreaming, and writing. Second, Smith shows in what way Montaigne's themes of *reverie*, *promenade* and *solitude* inspired Rousseau to create the new theme of the (pre)romantic solitary, ambulant, introspective *rêveur*.

Wolfgang Neuber explores the practice of writing and copying as a process of self-reflexion and meditation in early modern German family books. In doing so, he offers a close analysis of the Beck family book, arguing on this basis that such collections create a special form of intertextuality, in which the self reflects and refracts itself through the act of copying textual sources. The very definition of 'family book' depends on the fact that more than one family member contributes to it.

Four contributions focus on the theoretical discussion of religious meditation in late medieval and early modern theology. Diana Stanciu shows the crucial role meditation plays in the theology of the fifteenth-century nominalist Gabriel Biel, especially in his *Canonis missae expositio* and *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*. For Biel, the process of meditation represents the *via regia* to spiritual perfection, the most important means to establishing the essence of human existence, the 'facere quod in se est', which – through the aid of divine grace – is achieved by the mystical union with God. Whereas for Jean Gerson, meditation is primarily a volitional and affective process, Biel underlines its intellectual and rational aspects, construing it as

the 'sparkling of reason' ('scintilla rationis') that brings forth mystical union with God.

Jacob Vance closely studies the humanist mysticism of the great biblical scholar Lefèvre d'Étaples, whose conception of meditation as a ratiocinative process mediating between imagination and intellect, reconciles the spiritual thought of Hugh and Richard of Saint Victor, with Pauline doctrine, Pseudo-Dionysian theology, and Neo-Platonic theories of conversion and mystical union. In his editions of key Victorine treatises, especially the commentary on Richard of Saint Victor's *Trinity*, Lefèvre sought to reform late medieval devotional practice: he maintains that meditation is a mode of rational argument, based in philosophy, that both produces and is produced by faith, and as such, necessarily precedes and facilitates the contemplation of Christian mysteries.

Nikolaus Staubach demonstrates the crucial importance of the act of meditation for the religious reform envisaged by the *Devotio moderna*. Leading modern devotees such as Florens Radewijns (*Tractatulus devotus*), Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen (*De spiritualibus ascensionibus* and *Tractatus devotus de reformatione virium anime*), Johannes Busch (*Epistola de vita et passione Domini nostri*) and Wessel Gansfort (*Scala meditationis*), composed whole programs of spiritual exercises (*exercitia spiritualia*) based on the methodical meditation of the Life of Christ and the Saints. In the writings of the modern devotees, theoretical reflection on meditation is always closely connected with religious practice, since these texts are supposed to be used as manuals that aid believers in achieving spiritual progress.

Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen compares competing accounts of meditation on the Passion of Christ, offered by Catholic and Protestant theologians in seventeenth-century England. He takes as his chief examples the converted Catholic poet Richard Crashaw and the Calvinist bishop Joseph Hall, author of the *Art of Divine Meditation* (1606). In his Passion poem *Sancta Maria Dolorum*, Crashaw widens the scope of the Catholic meditative *imitatio Christi* by presenting the acts of reading and writing as avenues to effective participation in Christ's Passion. In his critique of Catholic meditation, on the other hand, Hall attacks the idea that humans can comprehend, let alone imitate, the suffering of Christ; he downplays the importance of Christ's bodily pain and argues that the Passion only truly takes place in Christ's soul.

Three contributors address issues that bear upon the Ignatian meditative tradition. Wietse de Boer analyzes two competing models of the

application of sense, the first penitential and recollective, the second verisimilar and imaginative, that came increasingly to seem incompatible, although Ignatius had himself mobilized both in the *Exercitia spiritualia*. Whereas the composition of place requires that images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints be visualized as if present to the senses, the sensory examination of conscience appears to have fostered an altogether different operation, based in metonymic substitution, that represents sins by means of their sinful effects.

Focussing on Petrus Canisius's *Notae in evangelicas lectiones* (*Notes on the Gospel Readings*), Hilmar Pabel examines the relation between meditation and confessionalization, showing how Canisius's meditative programme, composed for the Swiss clergy, doubles as an apologetic instrument that inculcates dogma and shores up orthodoxy. The *Notae* marshals scriptural and patristic sources in defense of the faith, compelling the exercitant to appropriate their voices as if they were his own, and thereby to revitalize himself spiritually and renew his commitment to preaching.

Feike Dietz explores the Dutch redactions of one of the most popular of all Jesuit meditative programmes, Herman Hugo's emblematic *Pia Desideria* (*Pious Desires*), which circulated widely in editions printed by the Amsterdam publisher Pieter Paets. His versions adapt the original in distinctive ways, most notably by deleting Hugo's lyrical *subscriptions* and instead relying exclusively upon a melange of pictorial images, biblical mottoes, and prose commentaries, designed to support the missionary project of the *Missio Hollandica* (Dutch Mission).

Three articles concern the meditative form and function of sacred pictorial images. Barbara Baert elucidates the complex interaction between a reliquary artifact, the *Johannesschüssel*, and a reliquary icon, the *vera icon*, the visual merging of which in the later fifteenth and sixteenth centuries inspired para-liturgical meditation on the relation between *vox* and *verbum*, bodied forth respectively by John and by Jesus. Three case studies reveal how the artifact comes to be subsumed into the icon, in ways that give rise to exegetical meditation on *John* 3: 30, the Baptist's avowal that he must decrease, in order that Christ may increase.

Jan de Jong asks what the term 'devout' signifies when applied by Italian art theoreticians of the sixteenth century: what does it mean to affirm the power of sacred images to propagate meditation, contemplation, and allied states of religious experience? The claim that

the painting's spiritual efficacy correlates to the painter's spiritual perfection, would seem to have coexisted with the counterclaim, voiced amongst others by Vasari and Gabriele Paleotti, that one and the same painting can produce divergent effects in different beholders, depending on their spiritual state.

Walter Melion explicates the compound structure and significance of Maarten van Heemskerck's *Balaam and the Angel in a Panoramic Landscape*: consisting of two large plates, the print offers contradictory accounts of the prophet, that together constitute a meditative crux issuing from the dual exegetical tradition, in which he epitomizes both spiritual blindness and spiritual discernment. The image urges us to consider how the former condition transforms into the latter, when the eye of the spirit, once closed, becomes the eye now opened.

The editors hope that the contributions to this volume may deepen our understanding of the important intellectual exercise of *meditatio* in late medieval and early modern culture, give an idea of the various mental processes and literary forms involved, and stimulate further research into this fascinating but still too little investigated topic.

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